



Morning Alert - Friday, May 12, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning News

NHK led with a report saying that President Trump signed an executive order on Thursday for the establishment of a presidential advisory commission on election integrity. Most commercial networks led with reports on yesterday's meeting between Tokyo Governor Koike and Prime Minister Abe, during which Koike announced that Tokyo will pay 50 billion yen to construct all temporary facilities outside Tokyo for the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics.

Top stories in national dailies included Prime Minister Abe's first teleconference with ROK President Moon (Mainichi, Yomiuri); an agreement between the LDP, Komeito, and Nippon Ishin on amendments to the "anti-conspiracy" bill (Asahi, Sankei); and Softbank's plan to seek talks with T-Mobile on a merger with Sprint (Nikkei).

INTERNATIONAL

Abe, Moon agree on cooperation, but differ on comfort women agreement

All papers front-paged reports on the first teleconference between Prime Minister Abe and new South Korean President Moon Jae-in on Thursday, during which the two leaders confirmed close cooperation in responding to North Korea's nuclear and missile development. However, there were differences in their views on how to deal with the comfort women issue. Although Abe told Moon that it is important to implement the internationally recognized agreement responsibly, the new ROK leader said that there is strong opposition to the agreement in South Korea. Moon added that it is necessary to resolve history issues wisely to develop bilateral relations. Asahi wrote that although Moon did not directly refer to "renegotiating" the agreement, he indicated his willingness to do so.

Mainichi and Yomiuri wrote that the GOJ will keep a close eye on future moves by Moon with regard to the comfort women accord.

New Zealand prime minister to visit Japan

Asahi, Yomiuri, and Nikkei wrote that Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga announced on Thursday that New Zealand Prime Minister English will visit Japan on May 16-18 for talks with Prime Minister Abe. Yomiuri speculated that the two leaders will discuss the future of the TPP, as both Japan and New Zealand are seeking its effectuation without U.S. participation. Nikkei conjectured that Abe and English will confirm cooperation toward the effectuation of the TPP agreement by the 11 member states.

ECONOMY

New Zealand completes domestic procedures to ratify TPP agreement

Mainichi wrote that the government of New Zealand formally ratified the TPP accord by approving it at a cabinet meeting on Thursday. The nation is the second signatory of the accord following Japan. Trade Minister McClay issued a statement saying that this is a clear message that setting high-quality trade rules for the Asia-Pacific region is worthwhile.

Japan, EU to hold EPA talks

Nikkei wrote that Japan and the EU will hold EPA talks in Brussels from May 15. They last held such talks in Tokyo on April 3-5.

SECURITY

Komeito calls on GOJ to end operations at Futenma by 2019

Yomiuri wrote that during his meeting with Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga on Thursday, Komeito Secretary General Inoue presented his party's proposals for reducing the base-hosting burden on Okinawa, including calling for an end to operations at MCAS Futenma by February 2019. Suga reportedly told Inoue that although some of the proposals may be difficult to implement, the GOJ will address the issue seriously.

POLITICS

LDP, Komeito, Nippon Ishin agree on amendments to "anti-conspiracy" bill

All papers reported on an agreement reached on Thursday between the LDP, Komeito, and Nippon Ishin on amendments to the GOJ-sponsored bill to revise the Act on Punishment of Organized Crimes to criminalize acts of preparation to commit terrorism. The amendments include increased transparency in police interrogations and the establishment of rules for investigations using GPS.

The three parties are seeking to pass the amended bill at a plenary session of the Lower House on May 18, but the Democratic Party and the Japanese Communist Party are set to resist it. Asahi wrote that the amendments are aimed at deflecting the opposition bloc's criticism that the ruling coalition is trying to steamroll the bill by winning an agreement from Ishin, which is not a member of the ruling coalition. The paper also wrote that the amendments will not change the bill's fundamental nature of limiting freedom of thought.

Kishida expresses reservations about Abe's constitutional revision plan

Asahi, Mainichi, and Nikkei wrote that during a meeting of his faction on Thursday Foreign Minister Kishida commented on Prime Minister Abe's recently announced plan to revise the Constitution. He said that the view he expressed in 2015 that it is not necessary to immediately revise Article 9 has not changed. He added, however, that he would like to confirm in what ways his views differ from or correspond to Abe's.

